

VIA WIRELESS

Novelized by Thompson Buchanan From the Successful Play of the Same Name
By WINCHELL SMITH, FREDERIC THOMPSON and PAUL ARMSTRONG

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(Continued.)

"Oh, no; don't bother. I'll wait till they get through. I was just going to see them on a little business about the business from gun. And that reminds me. Give me Mr. Rhinestrom's address, won't you? I have to drop him a letter."

"Rhinestrom's address?" she asked curiously.

"The man nodded.

"Sure. Rhinestrom, the inventor of the gun they're making here. Can't you give me his address? If you don't remember it look at the last letter you sent him."

"Why, I've never sent him any letters," Mabel returned curiously. "If you want his address, why don't you get it from Mr. Pinckney?"

"That's a good idea," he said. "I'll just do that. You take all Mr. Pinckney's dictation, don't you?"

"And he's never written to Rhinestrom?" demanded Bradley, with sudden sternness.

"For a moment the girl flared up.

"Say, who are you anyhow? What do you want? Are you trying to pump me?"

"Her questioner smiled blandly.

"Oh, please don't suggest such a thing," he said. "I'm going in the works now to see a man named O'Leary. When Mr. Durant comes tell him that Mr. Bradley of the secret service is in the works; then send for me. Goodbye. Much obliged for what you had to tell me."

Mabel O'Brien leaned back in her chair, looking after Bradley with a curious expression on her face.

"Well, what do you think of that?" she said to herself at last in astonishment. "Him a detective! Well, he's a pretty good looking fellow—for a detective. I wonder what he's up to. I remember he was around here a month ago."

For a moment the girl flared up.

"Will I mind?" she exclaimed. "You know I'll do anything in the world I can to clear Mr. Sommers of any blame. Have you found out anything so far?"

Bradley shook his head.

"I've got no positive proof, but I think I shall have before this investigation is over."

"And Mr. Sommers will be cleared when he goes before the court of inquiry at Washington?" persisted the girl.

Bradley bowed.

"I certainly hope so, Miss Durant. You know how much I owe to Mr. Sommers and to you. I feel sure he is innocent of any neglect or wrongdoing, and you can depend on me to work my head off to clear him. Everything will depend, however, on what I can get from Marsh."

Frances looked surprised.

"I can't think Marsh is guilty," she admitted anxiously. "He's been in the works for years, and nothing's ever been said against him."

Bradley nodded.

"I know all that, Miss Durant. But may I tell you a secret? I believe Marsh is the inventor of the Rhinestrom gun, and if I can prove that the rest is easy."

"And if you can't?" the girl asked fearfully.

Bradley smiled with confidence.

"I never let myself look on that side," he said. "Now I must leave you. I'll be back in a few minutes."

When the door had closed on Bradley the girl turned impulsively to Sommers at her side.

"What will you do if you find they are against you?" she asked bluntly.

"There is nothing that I can do then, Frances. I'll be dishonored, a disgraced man."

"You mean," she persisted, "if this investigation discloses nothing and the

I couldn't ask that sacrifice of you." Impulsively the girl had laid her hand on his arm.

"Then listen, dearest," she said softly, but with determination that would not be denied. "If the Washington authorities place the blame of the accident upon you, if you are dishonored and disgraced, you need not come back to me."

"She paused a moment, then added softly, raising her eyes to him, 'You need not come back to me, for I will come to you.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

GETTING AT THE TRUTH.

THE inquiry at the Durant works to establish responsibility for the failure of the Sommers gun was simply organized. Mr. Durant put the entire matter in the hands of Bradley, giving him authority to question everybody connected with the work and if possible to bring out the entire truth. Besides Bradley and Mr. Durant, Pinckney, Sommers, Frances and the stenographer, Mabel O'Brien, were the only ones allowed at the examination.

"I want you to understand, Mr. Bradley," declared the steel man before they began, "that I and my plant are entirely at your service. I am as anxious as you to find just where the blame lies, and if any men in my employ are responsible I can assure you they will be punished."

Bradley bowed.

"I am convinced of your sincerity, sir," he said, "and I shall take full advantage of your offer."

"Whom do you wish to question first?" asked Durant.

"Marsh," replied the secret service man promptly.

The owner of the plant immediately sent a boy to call the head draughtsman.

"And after Marsh?" he suggested.

"We might as well have the names of all the witnesses, so we can call them quickly."

Bradley smiled.

"The second witness will also be Marsh."

"And the third?" suggested the puzzled steel man.

"Marsh again," came the grim reply. Mr. Durant looked up surprised, a little startled.

"You have settled on Marsh, then, as the guilty man?"

Bradley shook his head.

"Oh, by no means, Mr. Durant. I am merely getting at the truth."

Pinckney had been sitting grimly, his brows drawn down, listening to the talk of Durant and the secret service man. Now he broke in with some impatience:

"I don't think this is treating Marsh fair, Mr. Durant. This detective's attitude is apt to prejudice you against a capable and proved faithful workman."

Mr. Durant turned on Pinckney, surprised.

"I don't think, Edward," he said, "that I am apt to be prejudiced against a good workman merely because he's asked a few questions. Mr. Bradley may want to ask you some questions, but I don't think that can prejudice me against you."

Before Pinckney could reply Marsh entered. He was in his shirt sleeves, having just come from his desk, and he stood beside the door, looking about the room furtively, suspiciously, fearfully. Mr. Durant smiled in friendly fashion, for Marsh had worked many years at the plant, and he liked him immensely.

"Marsh," began the steel man, "this is Mr. Bradley of the United States secret service. He wants to ask you some questions about forging the Sommers gun. I want you to tell him everything you know in connection with that affair."

"Yes, sir," replied the head draughtsman, but his tone was so weak that Pinckney, fearful of his fellow conspirator's strength and courage, broke in almost angrily:

"Marsh was not in charge of that job, and consequently he"—Bradley turned quickly. His smile was just as

"Marsh was not in charge of that job," bland, but in his voice there was a steely touch that showed that he would not brook interference.

"I'll do the talking, if you please, Mr. Pinckney."

"But, I tell you, he had nothing to do with it," insisted the general manager angrily.

"I understood that Mr. Durant said, 'The owner of the works nodded.'"

"Now, Marsh, who was in charge of that job?"

"Smith," replied the witness.

"Was he drunk?"

Marsh hesitated, looking weakly from Sommers to Pinckney.

To be Continued.

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